

Idaho Transportation Department

News Release

March 17, 2005

Contacts: Josephine O'Connor
(208) 334-8103

Darla Christiansen
(208) 334-8874

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Safe Cruising Expo puts teens behind the wheel at Saturday (March 19) event

BOISE – Teens can race go-carts, win prizes and get driving tips at the Safe Cruising Expo, Saturday (March 19), from 2 to 5 pm. The expo will be at Super Karts, 1220 N. Orchard St. in Boise and is sponsored by the Idaho Transportation Department Office of Traffic and Highway Safety (OTHS).

In addition to go-cart racing, the event will offer free pizza; tips on how to buy a car and what safety features to look for when buying a car; chances to win prizes and a drawing for a car stereo; safe driving education and instruction; and information about purchasing car insurance. All activities are free and open to the public.

On-air personalities from KQXR (100.3 The X) and KJOT (J-105) radio stations also will be at the event, giving away music CDs, T-shirts and stickers.

The event will kick off a statewide campaign to educate teens about safe driving behavior and to promote use of the Web site XTR4.com Teen Driver ("Xtra Training Resource for teens").

The OTHS-sponsored site combines education and entertainment to prepare young drivers for their driver license exams, help them better understand the principles behind Idaho's driving laws and ultimately reduce the number of fatal or serious-injury crashes involving teens.

"The first few months after getting a driver license is the critical time for novice drivers to develop good driving habits," says Josephine O'Connor of OTHS. "Parents need to continue teaching lessons about responsibility, and ensure their teens understand that driving is a privilege, not a right."

March 17, 2005

Safe Cruising Expo Saturday (March 19)

Page 2

O'Connor offers the following guidelines for parents of teen drivers:

- **Insist on seat belt use.** None of the Idaho teens ejected and killed or seriously injured in crashes in 2003 were buckled up. In Idaho, seat belt use is lowest among males 18-24 years old.
- **Forbid drinking and driving.** Twenty percent of Idaho teens involved in fatal crashes in 2003 were impaired by alcohol or drugs, though none were legally old enough to buy alcohol.
- **Limit night driving.** Teen drivers are three times as likely as drivers age 20 or older to be involved in fatal crashes between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- **Avoid teen passengers.** A teen's risk of dying nearly doubles with at least one young male passenger in the car.

Car crashes are the No. 1 killer of teens in America, although most parents think drugs and alcohol pose a bigger threat, according to a survey by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In Idaho, teenagers account for one out of every four car crashes, even though they represent a only 7 percent of the state's driving population. Overall, teens age 15-19 are more than twice as likely to be involved in crashes as all other drivers, according to OTHS figures.

XTR4.com addresses safe driving issues such as impaired driving, wearing a seat belt and speeding. The colorful, action-oriented site engages teens and offers the chance to win prizes while furthering their driver education. An excerpt from the site reads:

Go Take A Flying Leap

35 mph seems really slow, doesn't it? Especially if you've just exited off a freeway where you were cruising at a cool 65 mph. Oddly enough, a sloooooow 35 mph can generate some serious force if you're involved in a crash – about the same as jumping off a three-story building. Actually, it's not so much the jumping as the sudden deceleration against pavement that creates the force, but you get where we're coming from.

For more information on the Safe Cruising Expo, call (208) 334-8103 or go to www.XTR4.com

- 30 -